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Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its seventy-second session the item entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item, held a general debate and took action on the item at its 23rd meeting, on 2 November 2017.[1]

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/72/46);

(b) A list of Member States expressing interest in membership of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/72/557).

4. At the 23rd meeting, on 2 November, the representative of Belgium, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, made a statement on the work of that Committee.

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.13

5. At the 23rd meeting, on 2 November, the representative of Belgium, on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Monaco, Peru, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Effects

[1] See A/C.4/72/SR.23.

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of atomic radiation" (A/C.4/72/L.13). Subsequently, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

6. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

7. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.13 without a vote (see para. 8).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which humankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on humankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Acknowledging the concerns about the radiological consequences of nuclear accidents,

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work, and welcoming the increased commitment of States members of the Committee,

Emphasizing the vital need for sufficient, assured and predictable funding, as well as efficient management, of the work of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to arrange the annual sessions and coordinate the development of documents based on scientific reviews of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment,

Recognizing the increasing importance of the scientific work of the Scientific Committee and the need to carry out unforeseen additional work, such as after the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station,

Considering that the high quality of the work and the scientific rigour of the Scientific Committee need to be maintained in the future,

Recognizing the importance of disseminating the findings of the Scientific Committee, in particular to the public, and widely publicizing scientific knowledge about atomic radiation, and recalling in that context principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[1]

Noting the need for the resources of the Scientific Committee to be sufficient, assured and predictable, and recognizing the importance of voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to support the work of the Committee,

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

Commending the secretariat of the Scientific Committee for its ongoing efforts to ensure the sustainable and effective work of the Committee, and encouraging all States in a position to do so to provide support to the secretariat of the Committee,

Expressing its appreciation to the outgoing Secretary of the Scientific Committee for his personal contribution to the activities of the Committee,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution that it has been making since its inception to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgment;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

3. *Re-emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report will be able to reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

4. *Notes with appreciation* the work of the Scientific Committee, and takes note of the report on its sixty-fourth session, [2] including the report on the implementation of its long-term strategic directions, and encourages the Committee, over its coming sessions, to continue to work towards implementing strategies to support its long-term efforts to serve the scientific community, as well as wider audiences;

5. *Appreciates* the arrangements made by the Scientific Committee for activities to follow up on its 2013 evaluation of the levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami, such as the systematic review of scientific information published since the completion of the Committee's evaluation, [3] welcomes the publication of the third review, and encourages the secretariat of the Committee to disseminate the findings of the Committee's systematic reviews, in particular, to the public;

6. *Welcomes* the two substantive scientific evaluations completed by the Scientific Committee during its sixty-fourth session, on the principles and criteria for ensuring the quality of the Committee's reviews of epidemiological studies of radiation exposure and on epidemiological studies of cancer risk due to low-dose-rate radiation from environmental sources, [4] looks forward to the publication of the supporting scientific annexes thereto, and appreciates the evaluation of data on thyroid cancer in regions affected by the Chernobyl accident;

7. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session;

8. *Supports* the intentions and plans of the Scientific Committee for conducting its programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, in particular its next periodic global surveys of radiation exposure, to be conducted in close cooperation with other relevant organizations, and requests the Committee to submit plans for its ongoing and future programme of work to the Assembly at its seventy-third session;

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[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-second Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/72/46).

[3] Ibid., chap. II, sect. B.1.

[4] Ibid., chap. III.

9. *Welcomes* developments in streamlining procedures for publishing the reports of the Scientific Committee electronically on its official website and as sales publications, and calls upon the secretariat to continue both to monitor the timely publication of those reports and to strive to publish them within the same calendar year as their approval;

10. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the secretariat to continue to facilitate such consultations;

11. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the levels and effects of ionizing radiation, and invites the Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

12. *Recalls* the strategy of the Scientific Committee to improve data collection, encourages in this regard Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about levels, effects and risks of radiation exposure from various sources, which would greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Committee to the General Assembly, and encourages the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and other relevant organizations to further collaborate with the secretariat on arrangements for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on radiation exposures of patients, workers and the public;

13. *Welcomes* the use and ongoing development by the secretariat of an online platform for collecting data on the exposure of patients and workers, and urges Member States to take part in the Scientific Committee's global surveys of radiation exposure and to nominate a national contact person to facilitate coordination of the collection and submission of data on the exposure of patients, workers and the public within the country;

14. *Takes note* of the Scientific Committee's outreach strategy for the coming years, in particular the enhancement of the website of the Committee and the publication of informative leaflets and posters in all the official languages of the United Nations, and continues to encourage that consideration be given to publishing the website in all of those languages;

15. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue, within existing resources, to service the Scientific Committee and to disseminate its findings to Member States, the scientific community and the public and to ensure that the administrative measures in place are appropriate, including clear roles and responsibilities of the various actors,[5] so that the secretariat is able to adequately and efficiently service the Committee in a predictable and sustainable manner and effectively facilitate the use of the invaluable expertise offered to the Committee by its members in order that the Committee may discharge the responsibilities and mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly;

16. *Also requests* the United Nations Environment Programme, in view of the resignation of the current Secretary of the Scientific Committee, to take proactive steps to ensure continuity in the Committee secretariat through the timely appointment of the next Secretary;

17. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to ensure that support for the Scientific Committee is appropriate, sufficient and, where necessary, strengthened,

[5] Ibid., chap. II, sect. E, para. 39.

within existing resources, particularly with regard to the deputization of the Secretary and the avoidance of disruptions in staffing, and to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session on these issues;

18. *Encourages* Member States in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and also to make contributions in kind, in order to support the work of the Scientific Committee, and the dissemination of its findings, in a sustainable manner;

19. *Takes note* of the list provided by the Secretary-General, pursuant to paragraph 18 of General Assembly resolution 71/89 of 6 December 2016, of Member States that had expressed, by 11 September 2017, their interest in membership in the Scientific Committee, namely, Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Norway and the United Arab Emirates,[6] and invites each of these Member States to designate one scientist to attend the sixty-fifth session of the Committee as an observer;

20. *Decides* to review the possible increase in the membership of the Scientific Committee with a view to establishing a procedure at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly for possible further increases in membership of the Committee, and to apply this procedure with regard to the list referred to in paragraph 19 above, pursuant to paragraph 19 of Assembly resolution 66/70 of 9 December 2011.

[6] A/72/557.